



News Release

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New COVID-19 safety guidance released after multi-county outbreak linked to high school wrestling tournaments

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH), is updating the [health and safety requirements](#) for high contact indoor sports in the wake of a multi-school, multi-county outbreak. The outbreaks are linked to a series of wrestling tournaments held in early December and are linked to an estimated 200 COVID-19 cases. Genomic sequencing recently confirmed at least three cases are omicron.

DOH takes these outbreaks very seriously and is changing the existing guidance by adding the following health and safety measures for all indoor, high-contact sports and activities (basketball, wrestling, water polo, and competitive cheer), effective immediately:

- Required testing of all athletes, coaches, trainers, and support personnel, regardless of vaccination status.
- Increased testing frequency to three times per week. Among those screening tests, at least one must occur no sooner than the day before the competition; ideally, and whenever possible, the day of the event.

In addition, DOH wants to remind people of existing requirements for all K-12 sporting events that help keep athletes, staff, and families safer when attending these events:

- All indoor event spectators must wear masks and should distance from other families or households to the degree possible.
- Mask wearing is required among all athletes, coaches, trainers, and support personnel in indoor public spaces except when actively competing.
- Referees must wear masks except when actively officiated and running.

DOH also recognizes some of the affected local health, education, or athletic leaders are choosing to postpone or cancel sporting events or pause sporting activities in order to stop further spread of the disease. There may be differences in how these activities are handled, so we would encourage people to be patient with any potential process or scheduling changes at the local level.

“Omicron is a game-changer, but we know layered prevention measures slow the spread of COVID-19 in sports, schools, and communities.” said Lacy Fehrenbach, Deputy Secretary for the COVID-19 response. “Please get vaccinated, boosted, wear a well-fitting mask, and maintain your distance to help our kids stay healthy, stay in the game, and stay in school.”

“Vaccinations, in addition to testing and masking, will help keep our athletes healthy and allow everyone to continue to enjoy sporting events while also limiting the spread of disease,” said Dr. Tao Sheng Kwan-Gett, Chief Science Officer. “Getting a booster will make protection against the omicron variant even stronger. The booster vaccine is now available for everyone 16 years and older.”

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